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AUTHOR Cernonok, Jevgenij
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ABSTRACT

This syllabus outlines a two semester course to accompany the basic textbook: THE EPIC OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE by Marc Slonim. An introduction to the guide gives a brief summary of the history of Russian literature and objectives of the course are stated, defining concepts and understandings to be developed. In addition, teaching techniques are described, suggesting activities such as group discussions, reports, comparative studies, and utilizing Russian history, geography, and culture, especially films and music. Course content is divided into chronological periods, emphasizing literary movements, major authors, historical themes, and literary genres. First semester units of study are: 1) The Beginnings; 2) Poets, Playwrights and Satirists of the Eighteenth Century; 3) The New Era; 4) From Napoleonic Invasion to the Decembrists; 5) The Golden Age (A. S. Pushkin); 6) Minor Poets Beginning 19th Century; 7) N. Gogol; and, 8) M. Lermontov. Topics for the second semester are: 1) Dreamers and Philosophers; 2) Westerners and Slavophiles; 3) The Critics and the Nihilists; 4) Literary Trends of the Sixties; 5) I. S. Turgenev; 6) F. Dostoevsky; 7) Russian Playwrites; 8) Leo Tolstoy; 9) Maxim Gorky; 10) M. Sholokhov; and, 11) B. Pasternak. (Author/JSB)

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CHINESE-RUSSIAN STUDY CENTER
Toledo Public Schools
Toledo, Ohio

Syllabus for use in Russian Literature
as prepared by Jevgenij Cernonok, 1968-1969

Frank Dick, Superintendent of Schools
Norman Klee, Project Director

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INTRODUCTION

Russian literature was discovered by the Western world only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many Europeans and Americans continue to compare the great Russian novelists and poets to giant trees that have miraculously sprung full grown in a desert. Unfortunately, this theory is totally unfounded. Students should be shown that Russian literature is over a thousand years old and only became international in fame and influence in the nineteenth century. No study of the main trends of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be profitable without at least a short survey of the primary currents of the past.

Written literature began in Russia immediately after the introduction of Christianity from Constantinople. This fact was responsible for the great influence of Byzantium church upon Russian culture. Byzantine church theocracy also was transplanted to Russia, where the Church was called upon to assist and strengthen the State. Students should be able to understand the impact of Byzantine influence in social life, arts, and first literature.

The Tartar yoke was responsible for Russian cultural backwardness. The Renaissance was unknown in Russia, and only the rise of Moscow brought to Russia some signs of literary awakening.

Students should be informed that the reforms of Peter the Great included every aspect of Russian civilization and his reign marks the end of the church's control over learning and literature. This period is very important in creation of the modern (18th and 19th century) Russian literature.

During the course period most of the time will be devoted to the study of 19th century or so called "Golden Age" in Russian literature and arts in general. In treating the pre and post Revolutionary period, the works of Maxim Gorky will be emphasized.

Following the Revolution, strict Communist Party control was imposed upon authors and poets. Under dictatorial censorship, it is almost impossible for writers to produce great works. For Michail Sholohov's "The Silent Don" many revisions were necessary to meet with Soviet Government specifications.

Russian literature covers an extremely wide era, more than can be treated in one year, it is vital that the best and most important works of Russian writers be selected for reading.

During the second semester only those authors have been chosen whose contributions are of national and universal significance and only limited number of carefully selected titles has been included.

OBJECTIVES TO BE REACHED

1. The chronological thread of the period between the introduction of Christianity into Russia and the present time.
2. An appreciation of the literary achievements of the Russian "Golden Age."
3. To present the subject of Russian literature to the American students as a natural outgrowth and development of Russian environment.
4. The immortality of the characters present in Russian literature will be strongly stressed.
5. To understand the difference between the Russian people and the present dictatorial government.
6. To understand the Russian peoples outlook on life.
7. To stimulate further study and interest in Russian literature.

MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES

1. There will be discussions about the literary works and characters in class.
2. Written reports will be done on different subjects, characters, events, or critics of the literary works. Written reports will be done at home.
3. Oral reports will be given by the students in class.
4. Reading of Russian novels will be an undertaking by the students at home so that one hour classroom period may be utilized for discussion of the works.
5. Literary "trials" will be performed in class, where literary characters will be defended and accused by the students. As a result of literary court, the students will decide the "sentence."
6. Russian literary works will be compared with American's and other nations' literature. For example--Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard to Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind.
7. Familiarity with Russian History and Geography

It is difficult for American students of Russian literature to completely understand some of the events in Russian novels without some knowledge of the history and geography of Russia. It is advisable that students take a course in Russian history before taking Russian literature. The students of Russian literature are given some information about Russian history as much as time permits. They also will be given a short survey in Russian geography.

8. Textbook to be used: "The Epic of Russian Literature" by Marc Slonim.

9. Classics read:

Besides textbooks, students have to read as many short stories, novels, poems, and dramas as possible. All reading should be done at home.

10. Films - Russian classic films on local T. V. stations and movie theaters will be followed closely.
11. Movies and filmstrips will be shown in class.
12. Russian music will be played in class like operas; "Boris Godunov," "Eugene Onegin."

THE FIRST SEMESTER

The Beginnings (Approximately 20 hours)

1. Introduction of Christianity Prince Vladimir.
2. Byzantine Orthodoxy and a written language.
3. Methodus and Cyril. Cyrillic alphabet.
4. Byzantine theocracy and Russian church.
5. Byzantine influence.
6. Translation of the books.
7. Church--Slavonic and colloquial Russian.
8. "Daniil's Piligrimage to the Holy Land."
9. "The Russian Truth" of Jaroslav the Wise.
10. The Chronicles of F. Nestor (1120).
11. Byliny--epic songs of the Slavonic men of might (8-10 centuries).
12. Ilya of Murom symbol of Russian might.
13. Dobryna Nikitich.
14. The rise of Moscow.
15. "The Lay of the Host of Igor" (17th century).
16. "The Third Rome."
17. Ivan Fedorov--beginning of printing.
18. Domostroy
19. Old Believers
20. Peter the Great "Create a window into Europe."
21. New alphabet.
22. Kantemir-Neo--classical school.
23. Mikhail Lomonosson (1711-65)
24. The Oldes.
25. Sumarokov (1718-77) Theater. Europeanized intelligentsia.

Poets, Playwrights and Satirists of the Eighteen Century

(Approximately 5 hours)

1. Catherine the Great
 - a) Voltaire
 - b) Montesquieu
 - c) Orlov Potemkin
2. Pugachev Rebellion (1773-75)
3. French Revolution
4. Devshavin
 - a) "Felicia"
 - b) Theater
5. Fonvizin (1745-1792)--"The Hobbledehoy"

The New Era (Approximately 10 hours)

1. Nicholas Karamzin (1766-1836)
 - a) Letter of a Russian Traveler
 - b) "Poor Liza"
 - c) Court Historian (History of the Russian State 12 volumes)
2. Old and new styles of the Russian language.
3. Vassily Zukovsky

Contemporary European poetry and Zukovsky's translation.
4. Zukovsky and Pushkin
5. Ivan Krylov (1769-1844)
 - a) Krylov and La Fontaine
 - b) The Symbolism of the animals
 - c) Novelist and philosophy and common sense.
 - d) Folk proverbs

From Napoleonic Invasion to the Decembrists (Approximately 10 hours)

1. Paul's reactionary region.
2. Liberal era by Aleksander I and effect on literature.
3. "The Forum of the Lovers of the Russian Word" (right wing of Russian aristocracy and bureaucracy).
4. "A Diary of Partisan Operations" by D. Davydon.
5. Arakcheyev--hangman of freedom.
6. Griboyedov "Tis Folly to be Wise," conflict between the two generations.
7. The Decembrists, December 14, 1825,--intellectual elite: Alexander Pushkin, Griboyedov, poet Ryleyev, N. Turgenev.
 Nikita Muraviev--moderate Decembrist.
 Pavel Pestel--radical wing of Decembrists--for a democratic, republic, emancipation of the serfs, distribution of land.
8. "The Russian Truth" by Pestel, "The Project of Constitution" by N. Muraviev.
 "Russia and the Russians" by N. Turgenev.

The Golden Age (Approximately 20 hours)

A. S. Pushkin

1. Pushkin is a key figure of Russian nineteenth century literature.
2. Pushkin's poems--perfect marriage of sound and meaning.
3. Pushkin and the Russian modern literary style.
4. Pushkin's first work, "Russian and Lundmila,"--beginning of a new way of writing.
5. "Eugene Onegin" (1823-31)--realistic novel.
6. Byron and Pushkin.
7. "The Caucasian Captive," "The Gypsies"
8. Peter the Great and Pushkin.
9. "Poltava"
10. "The Captain's Daughter"

Minor Poets Beginning 19th Century (Approximately 5 hours)

1. Ivan Koslov (1779-1840)--emotional and sentimental poems.
2. Kond. Ryleyev--Decembrist. Belongs to political more than to literary history.
3. Baratynsky--romantic poems.
4. N. Yazykov--was influenced by the Pushkin--young idealist.
5. Koltsov's folk songs.
6. F. Tyutchev--Romantic lyric.

N. Gogol 1809-52 (Approximately 15 hours)

1. Gogol--Russian Mark Twaine.
2. "The Revisor"--national comedy of Russia.
3. "Evenings of a Groft near Dikanka." Sketches of Ukrainian life.
4. "Taras Bulba"
5. "Dead Souls"--Russia in miniature.
 - a) The problem of serfdom.
 - b) Russian serfs and American Negroes.
 - c) Tchitchikov, Raskolnikov, and Nekhludov.
 - d) Unfinished masterpiece.

M. Lermontov 1814-1841 (Approximately 5 hours)

1. Lermontov--Representative of Russian Romanticism.
2. "The Hero of our Time"--prose.
3. Poem on the death of a poet.
4. Lermontov's opposition to the institution of serfdom.
5. Lermontov's drama, "The Masquerade."
6. Lermontov and Pushkin.
7. French Revolution and Lermontov.

SECOND SEMESTER

Dreamers and Philosophers (Approximately 5 hours)

1. M. Glinka--"Ivan Sussanin"
2. A. Verstovsky--"Askolds Grave."
3. Theatrical Activity--Griboyedov
4. V. Belinsky--Russian liberalism.
5. Polevoy--"History of the Russian People."
6. Salvation not in mysticism, but in the successes of civilization.

Westerners and Slavophiles

1. Belinsky--Westerner.
 - a) National literature.
 - b) Russian's past and present.
2. Slavophiles and Peter the Great.

The salvation of Russia in the preservation of her originality.
3. Aksakov--Slavophile.
4. Herzen--Westerner. "The Polar Star."

The Critics and the Nihilists (Approximately 5 hours)

1. Crimean War

"Tales of Sevastopol" by Tolstoy.

2. Serfdom--"The Plague of Russian Life" was attacked by

a) Turgenev's "Hunting Sketches."

b) Grigorovich's "Tales of peasants Life."

c) Ivan Aksakov's poems.

d) Herzen--addressed the open letter to Aleksander I.

3. Chernyshevsky--"The Contemporary."

4. Gorky, Dobrolubova critics.

5. Nihilism--Pisarev.

Literary Trends of the "Sixties"

1. Pomialowsky--"Bursary School Sketches."

2. Pisemsky--Russian Realist.

3. Nekrasov--"Who Finds Life Good in Russia?"

4. Tiuchev--"Slave Poetry and My Country"

I. S. Turgenev 1818-83 (Approximately 15 hours)

1. Biography sketch of Turgenev.
 - a) Madame Viordo
 - b) Life abroad (30 years).
- T. I-verse, II-short sketches, III-the novel.
2. "Memoirs of a Sportsman" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin"
3. Turgenev and serfdom.
4. "Rudin" and "A Nest of Gentlefolk" if time not permits could be only discussed.
5. Turgenev's characters: Liza, Lavretsky, Rudin, Helena.
6. "Fathers and Sons." Persons: Basarov.
7. Turgenev: an idle aristocrat, a Nihilist, a dreamer, rational atheist, or a practical man?

F. Dostoevsky 1821-1881 (Approximately 15 hours)

1. Dostoevsky life: gloomy childhood, imprisonments, hard labor, military service.

Three periods of Dostoevsky's literary career.

2. a) "Poor Folk" his short novel, and "The Double" was published after his arrest.
- b) The second from 1859 the date of his pardon where his lost wife and his brother.
- c) 1864-1880 Dostoevsky delivered his famous speech of Pushkin and his four major novels:

"Crime and Punishment"

"The Idiot"

"The Possessed"

"The Brothers Karamazov"

3. Dostoevsky the slavophile.
4. Dostoevsky deeply religious man.
5. Heart over the mind.
6. Outcome of suffering.
7. Political issue in "Crime and Punishment"
8. Dostoevsky's prophecy that Russia could become the savior of Christian civilization.
9. Dostoevsky democratization of Marxism socialism--based on materialism.
10. Soviet Government and Dostoevsky.
11. Dostoevsky the patriot.

Russian Playwriters (approximately 12 hours)

1. Ostrovsky

- a) "The Poor Bride"
- b) "In Poverty Is No Crime"
- c) "The Thunderstorm"

2. A. P. Chekhov 1860-1904

"The Three Sisters"

"The Cherry Orchard"

- a) The clash between sentimentalism on the one hand and materialism on the other.
- b) "The Cherry Orchard" and "Gone with the Wind" by M. Mitchell. Mrs. Ranevskaya and Scarlett.

3. Russian "Twilight Period"--transition between the downfall of the "House of Gentlefolk" and the advent of the peasant.

Leo Tolstoy 1828-1910 (Approximately 20 hours)

1. Tolstoy's biography.
2. Tolstoy's linguist.
3. Tolstoy's officer.
4. First manuscript, "Childhood."
5. Tolstoy in foreign countries.
6. Educational journal, "Yasnaya y Polyana."
7. Tolstoy and theology and ritualism of the Russian Orthodox Church.
8. Tolstoy leaves his luxurious home at 32.
9. Three periods of Tolstoy's literary career.
 - a) 1852-62
 - "Childhood"
 - "Boyhood"
 - "Youth"
 - "The Cossacks"
 - b) 1862-79
 - "War and Peace"
 - "Anna Karenina"
 - c) 1879-1910
 - "The Death of Ivan Ilyitch"
 - "The Kreutzer's Sonata"
 - "Resurrection"
 - "My Religion"
 - "The Kingdom of God is Within You"
10. Tolstoy, prophet and teacher of his generation.
11. Tolstoy and his mission.
12. Tolstoy Westernizer and Slavophile and teaching of his own.
13. Tolstoyism.

14. Tolstoy and world's leading religions.
15. God is the moral law inside man.
16. Tolstoy Western world sharply differentiative betw

Maxim Gorky 1868-1936 (Approximately 20 hours)

1. Gorky's life, before and after revolution.
2. "The Lower Depth"--most popular play.
3. "Childhood"
4. Future of Russia in industrialization.
5. M. Gorky as the classic interpreter of Russian proletarian culture.
6. Gorky as a talent but not a genius.
7. Gorky's "Mother"--a political document.

M. Sholokhov 1905

1. Tradition of the classical Russian novel.
2. The stark realism of the language.
3. "The Silent Don"--the most popular work produced in Soviet Russia.
4. Literary robots.
5. The author has revised the manuscripts many times.

B. Pasternak

1. Pasternak's poetry.
2. "Doctor Zhivago"
3. Publication of "Doctor Zhivago."